

other crusades for constitutional revision and prison reform. She actively opposed the Boswell amendment which gave election boards of "good ole boys" the power to deny the vote to persons they judged not to be of "good character."

Farmer's life goal as teacher, scholar and activist was to increase representation and participation, especially of women, in Alabama public life. A scholar of Alabama politics, she led several successful campaigns of her own and many of her students, inspired by her words and example, went on to careers in public administration, social work and teaching. Hallie Farmer's greatest success was that her voice was heard.

About the Author

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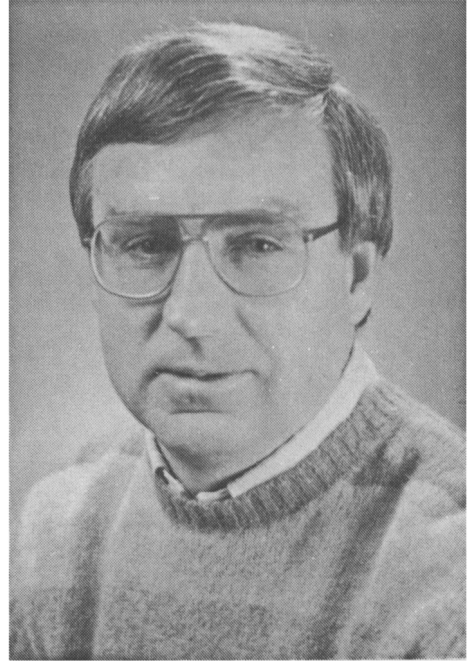
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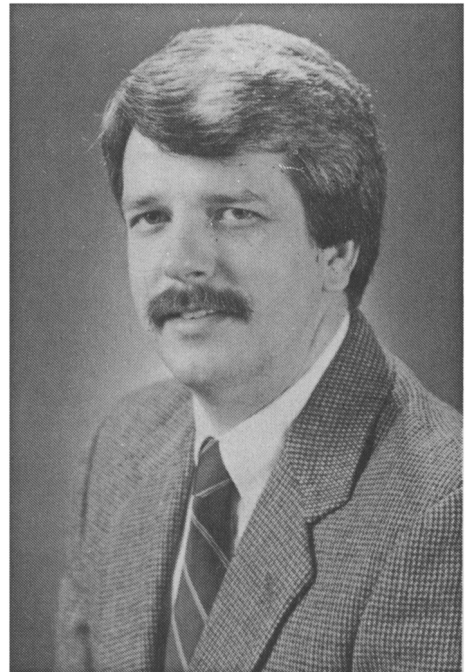
Elitism Among Political Scientists: Subjectivity and the Ranking of Graduate Departments

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The November 1983 edition of *Changing Times* published a listing of the most highly

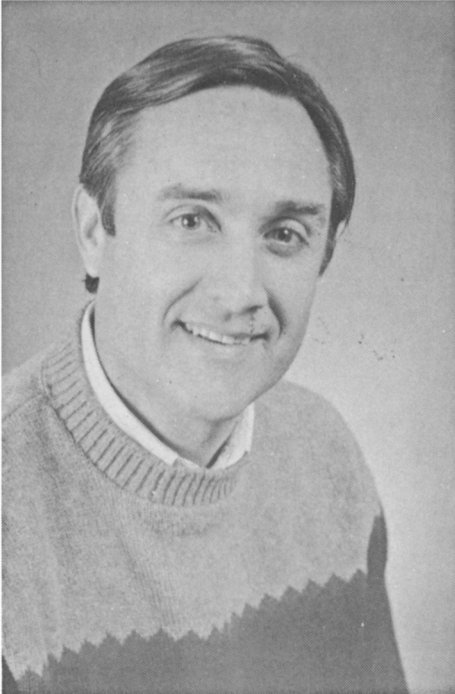


JEFFREY H. BAIR

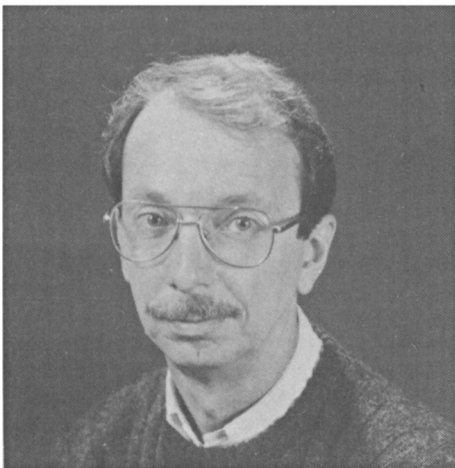


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The Profession



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regarded doctoral programs in 32 academic disciplines based on a five-volume study of the National Academy of Sciences. This study, entitled "An Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States," reviewed 2,700 Ph.D. programs in 32 disciplines from anthropology to zoology.

The ratings reported by *Changing Times* combined two key measures of reputation from the National Academy of Sciences' study. The first, "Faculty Quality," assessed how professors around the country rated their peers in the same discipline; the second, "Program Quality," assessed how well the faculty thought each program educated research scholars and scientists. *Changing Times* combined these two measures and derived a ranking of the top 10 percent of the programs in each discipline. For the discipline of political science *Changing Times* listed the top eight departments based on scores derived from the National Academy of Sciences' study. Following the assumptions of the *Changing Times* article, the ten schools with the highest combined scores produced a list of political science's "academic elite," the ten "best" programs in the country.

Given the subjective nature of the evaluation process which produced the academy's ratings, we suspected the top ten departments might be substantially linked to each other by hiring each other's graduates, and hence, enhancing each other's reputations. We also suspected that among the academic elite there might be a high degree of academic inbreeding—the hiring of graduates from one's own program (Bair and Thompson, 1983; Bair, et al., 1986).

In 1966, a comprehensive evaluation of graduate education by the American Council of Education was published (Carter, 1966). The Carter report concluded that the leading departments could be identified using either an objective or a subjective approach because the two kinds of data corroborated each other (Carter, 1966, p. 5). In 1969 the American Council of Education (ACE) conducted a reputational survey of 36 graduate programs which included political science. Participants were also asked to rate the quality of graduate faculty and the effectiveness of

doctoral programs in their discipline. Participants were also asked to estimate changes in these programs, either positive or negative, over the previous five years. In terms of the perceived quality of graduate faculty, the top twenty-two institutions were then listed in rank order. In addition, the relative rankings of these same institutions based on surveys conducted in 1957 and 1964 were also given (Roose and Anderson, 1970, pp. 56-57).

The National Academy of Sciences, in "An Assessment of Research—Doctorate Programs in the United States: Social and Behavioral Sciences," evaluated the quality of 83 doctoral programs in political science in 1981 (Jones and Coggeshall, 1982). The assessment was based on sixteen measures, twelve of which were deemed "objective." The remaining four "subjective" measures were based on a reputational survey of faculty members conducted in April 1981 in which 249 political scientists were asked to participate. One hundred and fifty-two (61 percent) did so, with sixteen listing themselves as specializing in international relations (11 percent), one hundred and seventeen in political science (77 percent) and nineteen in the other/unknown category (13 percent). A majority of respondents had earned their highest degree prior to 1970, and a majority held the rank of full professor (Jones and Coggeshall, 1982, p. 110).

A comparison of the results of the National Academy of Sciences' study and the 1969 ACE survey, which included previous surveys in 1957 and 1964, revealed substantial stability in the perception of faculty quality and quality of graduate programs over much of the last three decades. From 1957 until today only one political science program, Rochester's, that was outside the elite during most of the period was able to enter the top ten. Minnesota, ranked 9th in 1957, fell out of the top ten in 1964 and 1969, but regained its elite ranking in 1981. The others may have shifted their relative positions within the top ten over the last twenty-five years, but throughout this period they have retained their elite status

There may be several possible reasons why perceptions regarding the quality of graduate programs in political science have

Table 1. Percentage of Faculty From Top-Rated Schools

Rank		% Elite	N
1	Yale University	73.5	34
2	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	55.5	54
3	University of California, Berkeley	79.5	44
3	University of Chicago	75.0	28
3	Harvard University	78.9	38
4	MIT	78.1	32
5	Stanford University	65.4	26
6	University of Wisconsin, Madison	68.6	35
7	University of Minnesota	41.4	29
8	University of Rochester	84.6	13

remained fairly consistent. In our view, the consistently high reputational ranking enjoyed by top-rated programs is directly linked to the composition of their faculties and the highly subjective nature of the survey results.

Using the American Political Science Association's *Guide to Graduate Study in Political Science* (1982), the full-time faculties of the ten highest ranked political science departments were examined. The item of primary interest was where full-time faculty members at these institutions had received their doctoral degrees.

In analyzing the faculties of political science's top-ranked departments, it soon became obvious that there were numerous interrelationships among departments in terms of where the faculty had received their doctoral degrees. Table 1 lists the top-ranked departments and indicates the percentage of full-time faculty who received their doctoral degrees from one of the "elite" departments on the list (which would include those who received their degree from the same department where they are currently on the faculty).

As can be seen in Table 1, all of the top-ranked departments had a substantial proportion of their faculty who had received their Ph.D. degree from a member of the "Academic Elite." University of Rochester had the highest percentage of degree holders from among the top-ranked departments (84.6%), and the University of Min-

Table 2. Percentage of Own Graduates on Faculty

	%	N
Yale University	26.5	34
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	22.2	54
University of California, Berkeley	20.4	44
University of Chicago	17.9	28
Harvard	50.0	38
MIT	12.5	32
Stanford University	11.5	26
University of Wisconsin, Madison	8.6	35
University of Minnesota	6.9	29
University of Rochester	0.0	13

nesota had the lowest (41.4%). Most of the schools had anywhere from 2/3 to over 3/4 of their faculty who had graduated from one of the prestigious programs.

Table 2 addresses the issue of academic inbreeding among the top-ranked political science programs. Berelson (1960) and Caplow and McGee (1965) have demonstrated that a high degree of inbreeding among elite schools is not accidental. According to both studies, if elite programs are to maintain their prestige ranking, they cannot hire a large number of Ph.D.s from lower ranked departments, and this would include faculty from upwardly mobile "middlemen" programs

Table 3. Number and Source of Ph.D.s for Faculty of Academic Elite Departments

Source	Number
Yale	43
Michigan	27
Berkeley	20
Chicago	32
Harvard	60
MIT	11
Stanford	16
Wisconsin	11
Minnesota	8
Rochester	2
Total	230

whose elite credentials have yet to be established. Gross (1970) in his study of sociology departments found that the higher the prestige of a department, the greater the proportion of home-grown graduate faculty. With some modifications, Shichor's (1970) study confirmed Gross's findings. He found the relation between departmental inbreeding and the prestige of a department to be curvilinear, with the highest and lowest ranking departments having the highest rates of inbreeding, while mid-level departments were found to have the lowest rates. Not surprisingly, in regard to inbreeding, findings from political science programs were almost identical to those of sociology.

As can be seen, Harvard University had the largest percentage of their own graduates on their full-time political science faculty (50.0%). Yale University, University of Michigan, and University of California also had rather large percentages of their own graduates on their political science staffs (26.5%, 22.2%, and 20.4%, respectively). Interestingly, the University of Rochester had not hired any of its own graduates.

The ten political science graduate programs which were top ranked in the 1981 National Academy of Sciences study are undoubtedly strong programs.

Table 3 looks at the number of Ph.D.s produced from each department who were represented on the full-time faculty of one of the elite departments in 1981-82. Harvard had 60 of its graduates in faculty positions in one of the elite political science departments. Yale and Chicago followed with 43 and 32, respectively. Minnesota and Rochester had the least with 8 and 2, respectively.

Political science departments must compete with each other for qualified students. Moreover, their graduates' employ-

ability hinges on each department's national reputation. The ten political science graduate programs which were top-ranked in the 1981 National Academy of Sciences study are undoubtedly strong programs. However, our data suggest that a rather small group of ten institutions tend consciously or unconsciously to enhance each others' reputations by hiring each others' graduates. When elite faculty are asked to rate their peers at other schools they are, to a large extent, rating their former professors and/or students. In other words, there are a total of 333 full-time faculty in the political science elite, and 230 of them graduated from these distinguished programs.

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There are at least two ways of explaining the high ranking of elite programs over the decades. On the one hand, elite programs produce the largest number of graduates and because it may enhance prestige, their graduates typically promote the notion that their schools are the best. This seems to be true whether elite graduates move to mid-level or even low-ranking departments. In fact, studies may prove that elite hired by non-elite—which are the majority—stand to gain the most by promoting the elite status of their alma maters in competition for tenure, promotion and salaries.

On the other hand, tradition may also explain the persistence of the elite. That is, once reputations are formed and certain institutions benefit from them, those institutions make every effort to maintain their elite status. Ironically, not only do elite faculty rate their own programs

highly, but so also do large numbers of faculty from less prestigious institutions who overwhelmingly accept these reputational rankings without questioning their subjective nature.

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Are the ten highest ranked programs indeed the best Ph.D. programs in political science? Or, do they merely have the largest number of faculty members in the discipline and a vested interest in perpetuating the notion that they are academically best? Our data suggest that the latter is true. Two final comments seem in order. First, we contend that because of their subjectivity, current ranking systems are a detriment to the profession. They may impede professional mobility, reward status over achievement and result in programs (area studies, for example) of lesser renown being bypassed, although they may merit as high or higher recognition than those of the elite. Secondly, it is our belief that current ranking systems contain serious distortions and misrepresentations. Because they have the potential of doing as much harm as good, we recommend that as they are presently constituted all systems of departmental ranking should be routinely ignored.

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The Genesis of the *Journal of Politics*

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The first issue of the *Journal of Politics* was published in January 1939. Launching a regional quarterly journal in the waning years of the 1930s depression took single-minded determination and a belief that political science and government in the South should have a major voice on the national scene. Some would have said, and many did, that it would be a foolhardy and pointless venture.

At the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in November 1937 at Chapel Hill-Durham, a Committee on Publication was appointed to explore the feasibility of an SPSA journal. The Chairman of that Committee was Roscoe C. Martin from the University of Alabama.

Before leaving that meeting in November 1937, the Chairman had spoken at length with each Committee member and sounded each out on various aspects of the tasks confronting them. Although there was much work to be done, those men desiring a publication would keep noting in communications that a target date for the first issue ought to be no later than January 1939 if there was to be a journal at all. That meant a daunting series of impossible deadlines had to be met—one of Chairman Martin's most exasperating but fruitful methods of work. The final report recommending the establishment of the *Journal of Politics* to the then president of the Southern Political Science Association, Dr. A. B. Butts, Chancellor of the University of Mississippi, was written and sent by Martin on July 23, 1938, just nine months after the Committee had been appointed.